Riley, M ↓

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AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY

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August 24, 1991

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Rockefeller University
1230 York Ave
New York, N.Y. 10021

Dear Josh,

The American Society of Microbiology has created an *ad hoc* Committee on Microbial Genomics, and I have agreed to serve as Facilitator. You and I have spoken informally about your participation, and I am pleased now to confirm your appointment to the committee. A list giving the membership of the Committee is enclosed. Please check your entry, make corrections and supply missing information and return to me. I will then make a comprehensive listing of Committee members and send it around.

To get us started, I will list items that outgoing President Joan Bennett and I discussed as matters that could be dealt with by this committee. Would you kindly react to these points and add any other matters you think it would be appropriate for this Committee to deal with. After getting responses, I will combine the suggestions, and this will define our agenda.

I think we should address the various items by forming groups (like subcommittees) of people willing to work on each matter, and we should feel free to involve people in these working groups who are not part of this committee with but have relevant expertise and interest in the subject. I would appreciate it if you would let me know which aspects you are most interested in.

Here are some questions we could address:

Would it be useful for the ASM to play a role as a central collection point for databases related to microbial genomics? Appropriate databases might contain information on genetic maps, restriction maps, 2D protein maps, metabolic pathways, ribosome assembly, gene sequences. What other databases either planned or in existence would be apprpriate to this collection? Databases on strain collections are so focussed that it probably doesn't make sense to centralize them. How about information on pathogens and epidemiology?

Would it be useful for ASM to play a role not only in collecting but also in disseminating data on microbial genomes? This could be approached either in printed form as reference books or as electronic databases? Would CD-ROMs fit these needs? What are the considerations involved? What sort of repository would be needed? What sort of support staff? How would updates be managed? What would it cost to oversee and distribute, and who pays for it?

Can we promote the use of prokaryotic genome projects as models for the larger studies such as the human genome project? Is there a need for coordination?

Gene nomenclature. Several people are interested in the possibility of regularizing bacterial gene nomenclature so that all bacterial genes for a particular gene product would carry the same or similar names. There is already close consultation between the curators of the E. coli and S. typhomurium collections. However, some believe regularization would create more confusion than it is worth, and point out how entrenched some of the older terminology is. In any case, it should be possible to establish guidelines for uniform terminology for the future names of newly discovered genes. A working group of our committeee could explore the possibilities. We would want curators of current bacterial data collections such as Barbara Bachmann from Yale and Ken Sanderson from Calgary to help out on this.

Please look this over and indicate which item(s) interest you most, and propose additional items you think would be worthwhile. I look forward to getting your responses so we can start forming our groups.

As to modus operandi, we plan to work mostly by email and telephone, including conference calls. However, we do have a modest budget from ASM, and as needed, working groups could meet, and the committee as a whole could meet at ASM Headquarters in Washington, D.C., perhaps once a year.

Thank you very much for being willing to participate, and to help define pertinent issues.

Sincerely yours,

Monica

Monica Riley

cc: M. Goldberg
W. Peter

Josh, I will call you soon. I want to discuss a possible article for the Microbiology Encyclopedia

M.